

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter reviews the summary of the study, the discussion of findings, conclusions and some recommendations for further studies.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to survey and identify the problems toward the learning English program of grade 10 students (2006) at Sacred Heart's Convent School.

5.1.2 Respondents, Instrument and Procedure

5.1.2.1 20 grade 10 English program students at Sacred Heart Convent School were used as respondents.

5.1.2.2 Questionnaires were used as an instrument to this study. The questionnaire comprised 3 parts. Part I discussed general information of the respondents. Part II was designed to survey their opinion about the English Program, their language competency and problems. Part III aimed to investigate the satisfaction toward the teacher, and environment, including comments.

5.1.2.3 Once questionnaires were completed and returned, they were checked and verified for data analysis. Frequency, mean and standard deviation were used.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 General Information of the Respondents

The findings show that most of the respondent students (65%) were age 17. The youngest age for this group was 15 years old. Most of them (55%) started learning English program at grade 10 as the first grade. All students were Thai. However, 15 percent had a Chinese ethnic background. For language used at home, results show that 90% speak Thai only and 10 percent speak both Chinese and Thai. The majority of students (80%) had studied English for 6-10 years. 60% said that their father has been their financial supporter towards the learning of this program.

80% declared that their sponsors have their own business while only 5% worked as bureaucrats.

Almost all of the respondents (90%) had never studied abroad before. Only 10% had been to USA. One had been there for a summer course and another one had spent one year as an exchange students.

5.2.2 Information regarding the English Program and respondents language competence

It was the respondents' decision (45%) in choosing this English Program rather than a regular Thai program. At the equal amount of 45%, they choose this program because of their parents. The two main reasons for choosing EP at this school were location of the school, which was not too far from their houses, and the school reputation. Even though English is used through instructions, since all students are Thai, the language used in communication among friends both inside and outside the class was therefore only Thai. Regarding the problems students encountered during the course, all respondents (100%) thought that their language competency seemed to be the major problem they faced. (45%, 35% and 20% choose as 1st, 2nd and 3rd rank respectively) 90% of respondents selected uninteresting subjects (35%, 40% and 15%) No respondent had come across the problem of Cultural Difference from the instructor.

Nevertheless, 60% thought that speaking seemed to be more problematic than other skills, while only 10% go for writing.

5.2.3 Students satisfaction towards the learning and teaching and comments

5.2.3.1 For satisfaction towards the teachers, results show that the respondents were primarily satisfied with teachers' knowledge in the subjects taught (65%), teaching skill (95%), friendliness (45%), and ethic (50%). For teacher's accents, 55% of respondents were very satisfied. For cultural awareness, largely (60%) found it not significant.

5.2.3.2 For satisfaction towards the environment, the results show that they felt neutral with the classroom, the teaching materials and the atmosphere. (50%, 65% and 65%) However, for the relationship with the teacher, 60% were satisfied and 65% were very satisfied with the relationship among themselves and their friends.

5.2.3.3 For this part, the results show that the majority of students had negative viewpoints towards Thai English teachers in terms of the teaching method as boring and teachers were too strict. Thai teachers tend to base their teaching on details. For foreign teachers, the results were more positive. They had an attractive teaching method, being flexible, and having fun class. What students liked most about this English program was they got to practice and improve their English and the majority said they like the activities they had with friends. However, what they were complaining about concerns the boring subjects, the too strict rules and they need more flexibility from some Thai teachers. In order to improve the program, besides improving the above information about flexibility and interesting subjects, they would like the school to increase the numbers of foreign teachers and students so it would be another way of practicing the language.

5.3 DISCUSSION

5.3.1 Students' Background Towards Learning

The common ground between the bilingual education in United States and Thailand is the exposure of two languages used in educational instruction. The data from students' background supports the fact that students came from the medium to high socio-economic group rather than low social economic status.

The majority of students aged between 15-17, have never been abroad, studied English approximately 11-16 years, joined grade 10 as their first grade and the ethnicity shows that they do not have an English speaking environment at home. We can say that this homogeneous background makes the class easier for teachers to manage. However, in a class where students come from diverse backgrounds with different needs and goals, peer pressure, and the level of home support, can strongly affect the desire and ability to learn a second language. Furthermore, in the study of language acquisition by Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (cited in Lightbown and Spada, 2003), it was reported that adolescents are the most successful learners. Even though not achieving native-like mastery, they can attain a high level of proficiency if they have enough exposure to the target language.

5.3.2 Motivation and Language Learning

The results show that more than half of the respondents chose to learn in an English program because of their parents and friends; the motivation in learning came from extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic. It is said that learners who want to learn tend to do better than those who don't (Lightbown & Spada, 2003). Obviously students who made a decision in selecting an English program themselves have high intrinsic motivation compared to those who were forced to come. According to Gardner a highly motivated person will enjoy learning the language, want to learn and strive to learn and that would result in the achievement. Malone and Lepper 1987 (as quoted in Instructional Technology Resources Center homepage) have defined intrinsic motivation more simply in terms of *what people will do without external inducement*. Harmer (1991) said that intrinsic motivation plays a vital part in most students' success or failure. Nonetheless, this does not mean students who were influenced by others fail to be succeeded. They may have drive that comes from extrinsic motivation -- a motivation that comes from outside an individual. An extrinsically motivated person will work on a task even though they are not interested in it but just because of the satisfaction they will get from some rewards. It is likely that many teenage students are extrinsically motivated; their motivation comes from external sources such as wanting to pass an exam or please their parents. (Budden, 2003) According to Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984 (quoted in Instructional Technology Resources Center homepage) one of the most frequent failures in education is that students rarely say that they find studying to be intrinsically rewarding. Even if not all of them make the decision in choosing the program, the reason that lies behind choosing an English program shows that 90% of all students want to improve their English and this could be a drive for them.

5.3.3 Students Language Exposure

The data indicated that students use only Thai in communication with their friends both inside and outside the class. However, English study only in the class simply offers not enough exposure to the language. People believe that learning on the street is more effective (Lightbown & Spada, 2003). The rational that lies beneath a lot of successful learners illustrates that they have had exposure to the language outside the classroom. The content-based instruction that students get from the class

may not be good enough for students. The more students are exposed to an English speaking environment, the more they develop their language competency. Teachers need to maximize fluency practice and get students to use the language as much as possible.

5.3.4 Students' Learning Problems

The results show that the top three problems that students encountered from learning in this program were student's language competency, uninteresting courses and the difficulty of teachers' accents. School management can play a big part in helping students solve these problems.

At the position where students had been accepted to this program, they must have passed the proficiency test which measured their ability in the language. However, the school can assess their proficiency with the help of tests afterwards. Achievement tests and proficiency tests are frequently used for diagnostic purposes. Areas of difficulty are diagnosed so that remedial action can be taken later. (Heaton, 1998) Extra language class or activities such as English camps can also be added to regular learning classes.

Students also were discouraged by the uninteresting courses and consider this a problem to their learning. It's nothing else but the teacher's responsibility to bring up students' motivation and gain attention. Graham Crookes and Richard Schmidt' study in 1991 (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2003) pointed out several areas where educational research reported increased levels of students' motivation. One of them is varying activities, tasks or materials. The same routine task could lead to boredom. Larsen and Freeman urged use of authentic text for communicative situations. Krashen's "Natural Approach" supports the use of magazines to elicit the listening comprehension, and also to help to motivate and enhance communicative interchange in acquisition. (as cited in Donna Brinton, 2001) The course syllabus can be revised; however, any choices made must be according to the goals and objectives of the courses. Besides all mentioned above, the lessons shouldn't be so complicated, but rather contain forms and structures that are slightly beyond learners' current level, known as Krashen's "comprehensible input" or "roughly-tuned input". The comprehensible input challenges students to participate more rather than a "what

already know" reaction which results in boredom. Thus, it helps the course to be more interesting to students.

5.3.5 Importance of Cultural Awareness

The data shows that none of the respondents think that the culture differences between them and the teachers obstructed their learning. This is a positive result. According to Prof. Geert Hofstede(n.d.), Emeritus Professor from Maastricht University, found in his website <http://www.geert-hofstede.com>, "*Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy*". *Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster.*" As native speakers, teachers must understand cultures of their students, the characteristics and nature of the students or even their learning styles. Obviously students, in Asia are being passive when compared to western students who are more active. A teacher who does not understand this will have difficulty in teaching. So to create awareness to the teachers of other languages would help teachers in managing their class in a trouble-free way.

5.3.6 Students' Satisfaction Toward Teachers and Environment

The results show that in general, the level of satisfaction of students toward the teachers is quite high. The highest one is the accent of the teachers who are native speakers. The lowest one is the cultural awareness, as students feel neutral about it.

For the overall satisfaction towards the environment, the results show that the relationship among friends has the highest mean and follow by the relationship with teachers. The cohesiveness in students can determine the behavior in the class. The rapport in students, however, can turn to be negative and difficult for a teacher to manage if they misbehave. Hence, we should encourage students to use co-operative learning rather than create a competition environment.

5.3.7 Students Opinions about Thai English Teacher

The results show that the students have negative attitudes toward the Thai English teachers and prefer foreign English teachers. It is quite a stereotype to claim that Thai teachers are strict, boring, and fussy. Denis Girard's study (cited in Harmers, 1991) did a study in 1970 in order to find the answer to the question of qualities of teachers in order of preference to a thousand children age 12-17. The qualities have been prioritized as follow:

1. He makes his course interesting.
2. He teaches good pronunciation
3. He explains clearly.
4. He speaks good English.
5. He shows the same interest in all his students.
6. He makes all the students participate.
7. He shows great patience.
8. He insists on the spoken language.
9. He makes his pupils work.
10. He uses an audio-lingual method.

It is interesting that several qualities listed above match with the comments students made regarding the foreign teachers, such as, he makes the course fun and interesting. The level of formality is less when compared to Thai teachers, and their relationship is closer.

Another less formal study Girard has done produced comment on what makes good teachers. Questions were asked to Students and teachers and the two areas that most people mentioned were the *teacher's rapport with the students* and *teacher's personality*. People wanted a teacher who was “fun” and understands. Still, many need teachers who motivate students through enjoyable and interesting classes.

As the results from this study, students want Thai teachers to be more flexible and to make the course interesting. Still, not all Thai teachers are strict or being fussy. The qualities above however can be guidelines for consideration.

5.3.8 Students' Comments on Program Improvement

The top two comments regarding how this program should be improved show that students would like the number of foreign teachers and students to be increased, in order to practice more of the language and to decrease the numbers of uninspired teachers; they want to have a fun class. Since this English program offers a Thai curriculum but differs only in terms of the language used as medium of communication, the numbers of foreign students may not be possible to change. However, it is not difficult for teachers to create a fun class and be adaptable and flexible.

5.3.9 Students' Ideal Learning Program

From the study, students think that the subjects should be interesting and attractive. The teachers should be friendly, flexible, make the course fun and encourage students' participation. They should also have good time management.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

It would be more beneficial to take an in-depth study on the learning problems by:

- A survey of the opinions of teachers, both Thai and foreigner, who taught in the English program, toward the problems they faced in teaching.
- An interview should be adopted in the study for more in-depth feedback from the respondents.